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ARMS PACT OUTLOOK CALLED DIM ANYWAY

Carter, by Asking Delay in Debate,
Said to Admit Poor Chances
in View of Afghan Events

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 3 — Administration officials and members of Congress said today that President Carter's request to the Senate to delay debate of the nuclear arms treaty with the Soviet Union was an acknowledgment that it no longer had a chance of being approved after the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

The sources differed on whether there was a reasonable chance that the treaty could be revived and ratified later.

Even some protreaty senators and staff aides agreed with Senator Bob Dole, Republican of Kansas, who said, "I think that SALT II is dead for 1980." White House officials and other senators who are committed to the treaty expressed hope that it might be possible to take up the treaty this year and win approval.

The disagreement was based in part on differing views of whether the treaty had been moribund before the Afghan events.

President Carter today sent a letter to the Senate majority leader, Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia, asking him to "delay consideration of the SALT II treaty on the Senate floor." The letter, and a White House statement, said the President still believed the treaty was in the national interest. But the statement said that, in light of the present crisis, Mr. Carter believed it was inappropriate to debate the arms treaty at this time.

Senate Democrats Pressed Carter

The Senate's Democratic leadership was reported to have urged the President to request delay of a floor debate. "We wanted to prevent the Republicans from claiming they had forced withdrawal of the treaty," a Democrat said.

Nevertheless Senator Howard H. Baker Jr. of Tennessee, the Senate Republican leader and a Presidential candidate, said at a news conference that the President's statement was "altogether a victory for those of us who would not support the treaty in the first place" and who believed that it should have been conditioned on Soviet behavior.

Senator Baker said the Administration, which had opposed connecting the treaty to Soviet foreign policy, had now "embraced linkage in a lavish way."

Democrats tended to put a simpler construction on the President's decision, suggesting that he had acted not because he wanted to punish the Soviet Union or because he felt the treaty had lost value.

"I am convinced," said Senator Gary Hart, Democrat of Colorado, "the President's decision on SALT does not spring from a lack of confidence in the merits of the treaty, but rather a concern that recent Soviet activities would cause a sufficient number of Senators to reject it at this time."

Debate Now Termed Impractical

A White House official said it was "just not practical" in the present atmosphere to seek approval by 67 senators, the two-thirds needed for approval if all 100 senators voted. The Senate will begin a new session on Jan. 22. The official said it might still be possible to win Senate consent this year.

Senator Byrd said he supported the request for delay, adding "It would not be conducive to the SALT process to bring up the treaty at this time." But he said he continued to believe that the treaty "should be ratified because it is in the security interests of the United States."

Both the President and Senator Byrd stressed that the treaty had not been withdrawn and remained on the Senate's calendar.

Ronald Reagan, the Republican aspirant for the Presidency, said the Afghan crisis had offered President Carter a convenient opportunity to avoid a defeat of the treaty.

Informal polls of uncommitted senators, including one by The New York Times, indicated even before the crises in Iran and Afghanistan that there was a serious possibility the treaty might be defeated. By this week there was widespread agreement that, if debated early this year, the treaty would be rejected.

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Democrat of New York, summed it up by saying that the President's request for delay "is unfortunate, but altogether understandable."